

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE

Alkali Creek Incised Channel Restoration

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 3, Bozeman
August 29, 2016

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposed restoration of Alkali Creek to enhance floodplain connection, wetland vegetation, and aquatic habitat, as well as serve as a research experiment by Montana State University to understand hydrologic effects of wetland restoration. The project involves the installation of six grade controls distributed over approximately 3,000 feet of channel. The grade controls will be constructed with site harvested donor sod mats layered with dormant willow stems and brush. These structure types are purposely designed to be deformable over a period of years and fully re-integrated/biodegradable in the environment when their life-spans have been exceeded. The structures increase floodplain connectivity; overbank side-channel areas will be re-activated, but baseflows will remain in current channel for fish and aquatic species to migrate year-round. The overall goal is to re-establish a self-maintaining floodplain environment that would result in an improved and more resilient ecological condition for Westlope cutthroat trout and wildlife that utilize wetland and riparian habitats including moose, bear, birds, and western toad.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared by FWP for the proposed project and released July 13, 2016 for a 30-day public comment period. The draft EA was titled: Alkali Creek Incised Channel Restoration Project. The draft EA was circulated to a standard FWP Region 3 contact list and was also posted and remains available for viewing on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices>.

Summary of Public Comment and FWP response

No public comments were received during the 30-day EA review period ending August 12, 2016.

Final Environmental Assessment for the EA titled: Alkali Creek Incised Channel Restoration

There are no further modifications necessary to the Draft Environmental Assessment based on public comment. The updated Environmental Assessment, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and the need to improve fish and wildlife habitat in Alkali Creek, FWP's decision is to proceed with the proposed Alkali Creek Incised Channel Restoration Project.

I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Sheppard', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sam B. Sheppard
Region Three Supervisor